

GROSS (S.D.)

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania

AT ITS

TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL SESSION,

HELD IN

WILLIAMSPORT

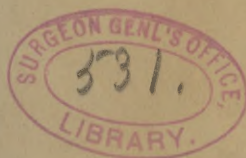
JUNE, 1871.

BY

S. D. GROSS, M.D., LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

EXTRACTED FROM ITS TRANSACTIONS.



PHILADELPHIA:  
COLLINS, PRINTER, 705 JAYNE STREET.  
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## A D D R E S S .

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THE medical profession is intimately interwoven with the infirmities of our race. Its origin, traceable to the wound that was inflicted by Cain upon his brother Abel in Paradise, began in the sorrows and sufferings, physical and mental, of mankind.

Science is advancing with giant strides. No bounds can be set to its conquests. Its progress is without a parallel in the history of the human race. Its outcroppings are visible in every direction. Chemistry has unlocked the great storehouse of Nature, and laid every form of matter, living and dead, organic and inorganic, under contribution. The use of steam has revolutionized the world, and annihilated space and time. We look around us, and feel amazed at the changes wrought in the economy of every-day life within the last third of a century. We instinctively stop, and ask ourselves, "Can this be?"

When it was announced to me, some time ago, that it was the wish of the Committee of Arrangements of the Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania, that the annual address of the President should be delivered in public, I experienced a mingled feeling of gratification and annoyance; of gratification, that I should have the pleasure of speaking a few words to the refined and cultivated citizens of Williamsport, as it were, at their own fireside; and of annoyance, because it compelled me to strike out in a new direction, in pursuit of topics, in great degree, foreign to those it had been my intention to discuss in the presence of my learned associates. How glad I am to meet you here this evening, it is needless for me to say. It is well that the people and the "doctors" should occasionally assemble in public, to interchange friendly

feelings, and to talk over matters which are of such vital interest to both. No one will deny that we do not come together often enough in private, in the sick chamber, where the physician, in the exercise of his peculiar vocation, sustains such responsible, indeed I had almost said, such sacred relations. It is much to be regretted that we do not meet more frequently in public, as it would thus afford us, who have so long been regarded as the servants of the people, an opportunity of explaining many things that must otherwise be as sealed letters, much to the detriment of all concerned. A great deal of the hard feeling that exists between medical men and the community is due to this very circumstance—to the fact that the people at large know little or nothing of the duties they owe to the guardians of their health and lives.

The Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania, whose organ I am this evening, has a brief, uneventful history. Instituted in 1848 by an act of incorporation, it held its first meeting at Lancaster, under the Presidency of Dr. Humes, and now embraces nearly four hundred permanent members. Its objects, as set forth in the constitution, are, the advancement of medical knowledge, the elevation of medical character, the protection of the professional interests of its members, the extension of the bounds of medical science, and the promotion of all measures adapted to the relief of suffering, the improvement of the health, and the protection of the lives of the community. Among all these objects there is not one of a selfish character, not one that has not an important bearing, directly or indirectly, upon the welfare of the public. The month of June has been wisely selected for the time of our meetings, when all nature is redolent with life, when the air is perfumed with the odors of myriads of flowers, and when the birds vie, as it were, with each other in singing night and morning hymns in praise of the great Creator. In its character the Society is migratory, never assembling at the same place two consecutive years. Not the least among its great objects, as of every similar institution, is the cultivation of good feeling on the part of its members by bringing them into more frequent and intimate relationship. Its code of ethics is that of the American Medical Association, whose duties are as clearly defined as those of the Decalogue, and any infraction of which is punishable by censure and even expulsion, except when it can be shown that the individual has sinned ignorantly, when proper leniency is of course exercised on the principle of the law of brotherly love and Christian charity.

At the present day the world abounds in all kinds of societies, associations, or unions. Some of these date back to a very remote



period. The most ancient, as well as the most renowned, is the society of Freemasonry, whose history, sanctified by deeds of charity and good fellowship, is coeval with the building of the Temple of Solomon; nay, indeed, many assert that it had an existence long prior to that event, "ever since, in fact, symmetry began, and harmony displayed her charms." Associations of scholars have existed from time immemorial. Plato and his disciples carried on their disputations at the Academy; Epicurus and his sect in the garden. The learned men who were attracted to Alexandria in the reign of the Ptolemies were leagued together for the extension and perfection of human knowledge. Their labors formed the crowning glory of those illustrious monarchs. The Royal Society of London was founded in 1645, and chartered, soon after, under Charles II. It is said that the *Novum Organon* of Bacon, published in 1620, by giving a new impulse to philosophical pursuits, paved the way to its formation. The American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia was instituted in 1769, and embraces nearly all the distinguished men of science in this country, as well as many of those abroad.

How long medical societies, properly so called, have existed, is a question we have no means of solving. Probably the earliest was that of the *Asclepiadæ*, the children of *Æsculapius*, as they were called, priests who had charge of the temples of the founder of the healing art, and who were the only accredited practitioners of antiquity. The medical societies of London, Vienna, Paris, Edinburgh, Berlin, Stockholm, Amsterdam, and of some of the other European cities, are all old institutions, which long ago acquired a world-wide celebrity by their labors and their contributions to the literature of the profession. Not a few of these societies bear the name of "Royal" or "Imperial," to indicate that they are, or had been, under the special protection of the sovereigns of the States in which they were founded.

In our own country, where everything is comparatively young, there are of course no very old medical societies. The Philadelphia College of Physicians, however, was instituted nearly one hundred years ago; and there is at least one State Medical Society—that of New Jersey—which has attained even a more venerable age, having celebrated its one hundred and fifth anniversary last month. The Medical Society of the State of New York is nearly seventy-five years old, while our own, as we have seen, is scarcely out of its teens. In some sections of the Union there is hardly a county in which there is not a medical society. With the history and character of the American Medical Association, which held its last

meeting only a few weeks ago at San Francisco, every one is familiar. Its great purpose is to protect the interests of the profession throughout the Union, to foster friendly feeling among its members, and to exercise a wholesome influence over medical education. Thus far, however, it has, it must be confessed, accomplished much less, in all these respects, than might have been expected from its high pretensions. Its deliberations have, of late years, been more befitting the arena of a political assembly than the sacred temple of medicine. Its transactions, comprised in twenty-one bloated octavo volumes, embody, amidst some precious documents, an immense amount of matter utterly unworthy of criticism—a few live cinders hidden in loads of ashes.

A wise man never fails to profit by experience. It would be well for our profession if the veil of oblivion could be thrown over much of what occurred at the meeting of the American Medical Association at Washington City last year, and, let me add in the spirit of the kindest feeling, over the proceedings of our Society at its meeting twelve months ago. Whenever objects of an illegitimate character, outgrowths of the social and political fanaticisms of the day, are allowed to obtrude themselves upon our deliberations, they cannot fail to cause exciting, if not angry, discussions and bitter animosities, unworthy of the intercourse of professional brethren. All outside issues should be lost sight of in the general welfare, and every member, having at heart the good of the Association, should do all he can to promote harmony and kindly feeling. We can never enjoy the confidence and esteem of our fellow-citizens if we do not respect ourselves. "Self-respect," says a wise man, "is the basis of the respect of others." We cannot advance the dignity of the profession if we ourselves are not dignified. We are here not to quarrel or to indulge in angry discussions, but to work, and to deliberate how we can best promote the interests of a profession which, in point of usefulness, is inferior to none under heaven, a profession which has received the sanction of God himself, a profession which can only be degraded when it is unworthily exercised by those who profess it. Such a profession should be a unit. Every man who practises under its banner should stand up for its interests, for the protection of his own rights, and for the promotion of the general welfare. I am sorry to say that of the sixty-five counties of which this great Commonwealth is composed, only thirty-five are represented in the State Medical Society. Eleven others, that were formerly represented, are, from some cause or other, no longer so. This is not as it should be. The entire profession of the State should have a voice in the Society. All its members



should be banded together as if they were one. The guerilla warfare that has been so long maintained only inflicts injury, and brings disgrace. A united profession is the surest antidote to the poison of quackery and charlatanism. The physician who stands aloof from such an association has either a very erroneous conception of his duty as a member of a great profession, or he purposely shuns it because he knows that there is some defect in his character as a man or a practitioner which would disqualify him for membership. There should be no apathy where there is need of so much activity and concert of action, no mill-stones hanging around the neck of the more elevated members of our profession, weighing them down to the common level. Fraternity should be the first principle of medicine as it is of Masonry, and every physician, I repeat it, should take a deep interest in everything which tends to bind more closely together the cords of good-fellowship. I know of nothing more sad, more pitiable, or more humiliating than to see men of the same profession abuse, revile, and vilify each other, when they should stand by and protect each other like a band of brothers.

Having thus spoken, in perhaps no very complimentary manner, of what I conceive to be our duty, as a great profession, let us see what we are and whence we came.

It would be out of place, in an assembly like this, to eulogize a profession whose character is so well known as ours. Its humane objects and pursuits require no comment. All mankind, civilized and savage, render it willing homage. The monarch upon his throne, and the peasant in his hovel, alike acknowledge its beneficence. It derives a sacredness, peculiar to itself, from its opportunities and power of doing good. If God imparts life, the physician, with His gracious assistance, preserves it when assailed by disease and accident. "He alone can open the eyes of the blind, reanimate the palsied limb, invigorate the decaying frame, cool the burning brow, and render the sick man's couch a thrice driven bed of down." What will not a man give for his life? When pestilence walketh about at noon-day, seeking whom it may devour, the people gather around the physician with a confidence and an anxiety which seem almost to say: "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole."

If we inquire into our origin, we have great reason to be proud, for we may justly boast of an ancestry to which no other profession, not even that of theology, can lay claim. Every child knows that Æsculapius was the god of medicine, and that the healing art was primitively exercised, in great degree, if not exclusively, by the

priests. Legitimate medicine dates back to our great progenitor, Hippocrates, who flourished nearly five hundred years before the birth of Christ. Of this wonderful man, who has been venerated in all ages as the "Father of Medicine," we are the direct lineal descendants. Born in the island of Cos, he lived in the best epoch of Greece, famous for its statesmanship, its philosophy, its fine arts, its morals, and its general intellectual development; standing side by side with Socrates and Plato, Pericles, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Pindar, Phidias, and Herodotus. Influenced by such associations and such examples, he devoted himself earnestly and unreservedly to his studies, and rose rapidly into distinction as a great and skilful physician. Deriving his principles from careful observation, he referred all maladies to two leading causes, climate and diet, the latter of which he regulated to suit the changes of the former as well as the state of the patient. He had great confidence in the power of nature in healing disease, and employed for the most part simple remedies. He wielded a remarkable influence over his countrymen, was often invited to foreign courts, left behind him imperishable works, celebrated for their graphic delineation of disease, and raised medicine from the degraded system of superstitious rites to the dignity of a learned profession. His Aphorisms, as they are called, embodying the results of the life-long observations of the most sagacious, patient, and laborious of investigators, have won the admiration of all time, and earned for their author the title of the first great medical philosopher of antiquity, a man who may justly be regarded as one of the precursors of the inductive philosophy, so happily expounded 2000 years later by Bacon. The respect paid to Hippocrates, during his lifetime, by the good and wise, and the veneration in which his memory has been held ever since, are the best proofs of his genius and scientific attainments, of his skill as a practitioner, and of the services he rendered to mankind.

The moral character of this great man was as pure as his medical character was exalted. "He had formed," remarks Mr. Adams, the English editor of his works, "a very exalted notion of the dignity and usefulness of his profession, which is only lowered, he said, in the public estimation, by the ignorance of its professors; and he supported this dignity in his own person by the most rigid attention to the morality of private life, by great simplicity, candor, and benevolence, in all his intercourse with the sick, and by unwearied zeal in investigating the nature and progress of diseases, and in administering to their cure. He is said to have admitted no one to



his instructions without the solemnity of an oath, the form of which is transmitted in his writings."

Such, then, is our ancestry. In this country we are generally known as the "regular" profession in contra-distinction to the "irregular," or that which has set up systems of medicine of its own. The Homœopathists call us Allopathists, because, as the term implies, we avail ourselves of every remedy and of every means calculated to mitigate suffering, cure disease, and prolong life. The medicine of the homœopathists is essentially an expectant medicine, in which nature does all the work without the aid of drugs; ours is both expectant and heroic, according to the exigencies of each individual case, each case being supposed to be governed by its own peculiar laws.

The number of Hippocratic physicians in America, Europe, and India, is not far short of a quarter of a million. In the United States and Canada alone there are at this moment nearly 75,000 in active practice, with nearly fifty medical schools, and nearly, if not quite, as many medical journals, together with a rapidly growing medical literature, of which any nation, even much older than ours, might justly be proud.

The stream of medicine, originating in the island of Cos, has not always flown in a steady or continuous manner, nor has it always been free from pollution and defilement. The world, until a comparatively recent period, was little benefited by Hippocratic medicine. In the dark ages, as they were called, the healing art was practised exclusively by the priests and barbers; and even as late as two centuries ago, the articles of the materia medica in general use were of the most revolting and disgusting character, consisting of all kinds of insects and reptiles, birds and fishes, and of the different organs, secretions, and excretions of man and other animals. The number of vegetable preparations was very limited. Not only were these vile articles employed, but from twenty to forty, fifty and even sixty of them often entered into the same prescription.

In the seventeenth century new light began to break in upon the profession through the labors and researches of Thomas Sydenham, an Englishman, universally known at the present day as the modern Hippocrates. Like his great medical progenitor, he was a close observer, and a successful interpreter of nature. His portraiture of disease can hardly be said to have been surpassed by any nosographer since his time. It was he who, upon being asked by an eminent physician what were the best works to be put in the hands of a medical student, replied: "Read Don Quixote; it is a very good book; I read it still;" such was his contempt for the writings



of his predecessors and contemporaries. Notwithstanding the impulse communicated by this illustrious physician, little progress was made towards the improvement of scientific medicine until the time of Percival Pott and John Hunter of England, William Cullen of Scotland, and Xavier Bichat, of France, the immortal founder of general anatomy, in the latter part of the last century. The ball set in motion by these illustrious savans and their pupils, scattered through all parts of the civilized world, has been pushed on with a celerity and success well calculated to elicit the admiration and applause of all thinking and enlightened people. What medicine is in our day, we need not to be told. Its story is one of steady, continued progress, without a parallel in history. There is no branch of the healing art that has not been vastly improved within the last thirty years. Chemistry, that marvellous, god-like science, is presenting daily offerings at its shrine, analyzing drugs, and isolating their active constituents, so as to enable us the better to test their remedial virtues; the treatment of disease has been greatly simplified; much less medicine is given than formerly; greater confidence is placed in the sanative powers of nature; and the knowledge of the physician is no longer couched in what Roger Bacon calls the "tricks of obscurity." A whole army of medical men, highly educated, gifted with talent and genius, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of scientific progress, is earnestly at work, interrogating nature at every point, developing her resources, and rendering them subservient to the interests of the healing art and the good of mankind.

If the question be asked, whether medicine as an art and as a science will ever be perfect, the answer is an easy one. No man in his senses would reply in the affirmative. As an art, a practice, or an exercise of the brain and hand, it must always be imperfect, sharing, in this respect, the fate of all other pursuits. As a science, medicine is far in advance of medicine considered as an art. The diagnosis of diseases in the hands of certain practitioners is almost as perfect as human skill and penetration can make it, and yet there are many ailments over which these same practitioners have, practically speaking, as little control as the most ignorant and undisciplined members of the profession. Their science enables them to detect the nature of the malady, or, in other words, its seat, progress, and precise character; but their art fails to relieve it; and this is perhaps one, if not the chief reason why some men, utterly destitute of scientific attainment, are, nevertheless, successful practitioners; successful because they are men of strong common sense, good observers, and wise interpreters of their experience.

Man is a compound being, made up of mind and body, with an animating, sublimated soul, a candidate for eternal life beyond the grave. Who but Almighty God, his Creator, can comprehend him, or unravel the mysteries of his complex organism, as it exhibits itself to us in health and disease? Thus far, says God, in his wisdom, shalt thou go, and no farther; and yet the physician is expected to know all things on the earth, in heaven, in the sea, and under the earth. No allowance is made for his natural imperfection, or the fact that, like the rest of mankind, he is obliged to perform his work with only five senses. He must know everything, not only in his profession, but out of it. Like Androïs, the marvellous automaton of Albertus Magnus, he must be capable of answering all questions, past, present, and to come. For him there must be no impossibilities.

There are certain facts, intimately connected with this question, which, if generally understood, would render the practice of medicine a much more agreeable pursuit than it is, and induce the world to look upon the failures and mishaps of professional men with greater forbearance and sympathy. Among the more prominent of these facts is, first, the one that there are certain diseases which run their course despite the best directed efforts of the physician; diseases which, for the most part, are but little influenced by medicine, and in which the chief duty of the medical man is simply to watch the case, guiding nature, so to speak, in her efforts at restoration; or, in the emphatic language of the late Dr. James Gregory, of Edinburgh, in assisting her "in obviating the tendency to death." To these maladies, the term self-limited is applied, a term the significance of which was first fully pointed out by Professor Jacob Bigelow, of Boston, and the late Sir John Forbes, of London. They are comprised chiefly under the names of measles, scarlatina, smallpox, and typhoid fever.

Secondly. There are certain diseases, as pulmonary consumption, cancer, and hydrophobia, which, from their very nature, as all experience testifies, are necessarily and inevitably fatal.

Thirdly. Many cases of what are known as curable diseases must necessarily have a fatal termination, because they are not taken in hand sufficiently early, before the occurrence of serious structural lesion, and dangerous constitutional involvement.

Fourthly. Many cases, again, can only be partially relieved; the organs and tissues, from long-continued disease, are permanently crippled, and no remedies, however judiciously applied, can effect entire restoration.

Fifthly. It is well known that many diseases, if let alone, will

get well spontaneously, without the slightest interposition of medicine, their natural tendency being to self-cure. Homœopathy has long been aware of this circumstance, and has taken advantage of it as a means of gain and reputation, by deluding the credulous into a belief in the efficacy of infinitesimal doses. Saw-dust pills, says an old physician, would effectually cure many of the diseases with which mankind are afflicted, if every patient would supply by his own labor the material of which they are made. The physicians of Williamsport, where saw-dust is so abundant, have doubtless had frequent occasion to test the value of this practice. Franklin, I believe, invented the saw-dust pudding, and I cannot see any reason why such food should not sometimes form a valuable substitute for the farrago so common in the sick chamber, especially in cases in which abstinence constitutes an important element of treatment. Mr. Abernethy was asked one day by a rubicund nobleman with a pimply nose, what he should do for the relief of his ailments. "Egad! live on a sixpence a-day, and earn it," was the pithy reply. Homœopathic broth, made of a pigeon's wing, divested of meat and marrow, conjoined with rest of mind and body, good air, good nursing, and the faithful attendance of an agreeable, confidence-inspiring physician, has cured many a case of disease, for which infinitesimal doses obtained all the credit. That hydropathy is sometimes equally triumphant is unquestionable. The skin, through which it aims to make its salutary impression, is an immense emunctory, throwing off from twenty-five to forty ounces of hurtful matter, in the form of sensible and insensible perspiration, in the twenty-four hours. Everybody knows how agreeable and healthful bathing and ablutions are, especially in warm weather, and in the hot stages of fever and other affections. "Cleanliness," says the proverb, "is next to godliness." If the use of the wet sheet were not conjoined with rigid abstinence from stimulating food and drink, and with daily exercise on foot in the open air, hydropathy would not be able to sustain its claims for a single day in the estimation even of its most credulous advocates. As it is, it is, like homœopathy, when practised as a separate and independent system of medicine, a delusion and a fraud. A Turkish bath has often relieved an incipient attack of rheumatism in an hour, but would any man of sense thence conclude that such a remedy was applicable to the treatment of all diseases or to all stages of the same malady?

A good hearty laugh is often more efficacious in relieving disease than the most potent article of the *materia medica*. The story of Rabelais and the Keys is well known. His friend, Cardinal du Bellay, being ill with an attack of hypochondriasis, his physicians



had ordered him an aperient decoction, to be frequently given in an agreeable syrup; but Rabelais, his immediate attendant, thought differently, and, taking advantage of the absence of his colleagues, while they were discussing in learned jargon, in an adjoining room, the nature of the case, in order to earn more satisfactorily the large fee they had anticipated, he built a fire in the yard, and heated a kettleful of water, into which he threw all the keys he could find. While he was busily occupied in stirring them about with a stick, the doctors came down stairs, and asked him what he was doing? "Following your directions," replied he. "How in the name of Galen?" cried one of them. "You are for something that is very aperitive," returned Rabelais, "and by Hippocrates I think you will own that nothing can be more aperitive than keys, unless you would have me send to the arsenal for some pieces of cannon." This odd fancy, says the narrator, being immediately communicated to the sick cardinal, caused such a fit of laughing as to relieve him at once of his suffering; and what renders the joke the more pertinent, was that the keys were made of iron and steel, which with water are the chief ingredients in chalybeate medicines.<sup>1</sup>

The value of money as a curative agent has often been experienced by the sick poor. "A shilling per diem for Mrs. Moreton," wrote good old Dr. Lettsom, when he was requested to give a lady, once the possessor of wealth, but now the inmate of a squalid garret, a prescription. "Money, not physic, will cure her."

It is the glory of Hippocratic medicine that it is founded upon strong common sense, close observation, and inductive philosophy; that it investigates morbid phenomena by the light of physiology and pathology, aided by various appliances of modern invention, vastly augmenting the power and precision of our senses; and, lastly, that, in the true spirit of eclecticism, it avails itself of every remedy and of every method, no matter whence it emanates, calculated to effect its aims and purposes, as a great scientific pursuit. It is, in fact, the only true eclectic system of medicine known to man, the so-called, self-styled eclectic medicine of the present day being simply a corrupt, mongrel offshoot of the Hippocratic school, planted, propagated, and sustained by men for the most part selfish, ignorant, and unprincipled.

Sixthly. What is true of diseases is equally true of accidents, as wounds, fractures, dislocations, and surgical operations.

With regard to surgical operations, every one, however trivial,

<sup>1</sup> The Works of Francis Rabelais, vol. ii. p. 13, London, 1854.

or however skilfully performed, must be viewed as an experiment, of doubtful result, influenced as the issue always must be by a thousand circumstances, for the most part utterly inappreciable by our senses, and often uncontrollable by our remedies. I have known a leech-bite and the little incision made in the bend of the arm in venesection, to be followed by erysipelas and death. On the other hand, the most fearful and extensive wound, as that made in amputation of the hip-joint, is often recovered from. A man who undergoes a severe operation is very much in the condition of a soldier who engages in a battle, with this important difference, that, while the former is sure to be severely wounded, the latter has many chances of escape.

Seventhly. It is well known to physicians that medicines do not always produce the same effects in different persons, or in the same persons in different conditions of the system. Thus, ipecacuanha acts generally as an emetic, opium as a narcotic, and quinine as a febrifuge, but in certain individuals, at different periods and under different circumstances, owing to idiosyncrasy and other causes, quite the contrary effects follow their administration. The same remark is true of the doses of medicines; some persons requiring large, and others exceedingly small ones to produce the desired action.

Eighthly. It is a common impression, shared by many physicians, otherwise intelligent and well-informed, that medicine and not nature cures disease. Now, disease, as every enlightened pathologist knows, is simply an aberration of function—not an entity or a distinct essence—and hence all that medicine can do is to remove obstruction, and thus assist nature in restoring the affected parts to their normal condition. Surgery never cures a wound; it simply dresses it, and places it in a condition favorable for union. Nature does the rest. Good, old, pious Ambrose Paré, who flourished upwards of three centuries and a half ago, and who, in intelligence and foresight, in genius and strong common sense, was far in advance of his age, was fully aware of this great fact. "I apply," said he, "the remedy, perform the operation, or dress the wound; God cures."

In the seventeenth century the most miraculous cures were performed with the sympathetic powder of Sir Kenelm Digby. In cases of injuries with an open surface, the powder, instead of being sprinkled upon the wound, was applied to the weapon, which was at the same time anointed with some special salve, and dressed at least twice a day, the wound itself being carefully bound up, and maintained at rest, from the contact of the air, for a week. At the

end of this time, when the bandage was removed, the wound was generally either perfectly closed, or in an advanced state of repair, and the powder of course received all the credit for what had evidently been exclusively nature's work, skilfully assisted by art. The result of this superstitious procedure no doubt furnished the original hint which led surgeons, in the latter part of the last century, to the improved method, now universal in the profession, of healing wounds by what is technically called union by the first intention, or union by adhesive inflammation.

It seems to be generally, if not universally, conceded that a physician cannot know too much; and yet, by a strange inconsistency, every woman considers herself as competent to diagnose and treat diseases as the most learned, sagacious, and accomplished medical man, who has made the study of his profession the work of his life. Franklin says every man that has attained the age of forty years is either a fool or a doctor; and Francis Bacon declares that, in the opinion of the vulgar, witches and old women and impostors are the equals of physicians. The remark of the English philosopher, uttered two hundred and fifty years ago, is nearly as applicable at the present day as it was then, especially in our own State. If, during the delivery of this address, one of my auditors were to fall down in a fit of apoplexy, and the most experienced physician in this room were called to his aid, a dozen persons would be found ready to proffer their advice as to the proper method of treatment of the case, although they might be as ignorant of the principles of the healing art as the man in the moon. Everybody considers himself entitled to take liberties with the doctor, no matter what may be his age or experience, forgetting that medicine is a great study, requiring vast talent and high mental training for its successful accomplishment. The physician qualifies himself for his lifelong task by hard labor, by long-continued effort, and by great personal sacrifices. It is by no sudden or unexpected inspiration of genius that he can diagnose diseases, or turn, as it were, his patient inside out, and successfully combat his ailments by the aid of his remedies. "Pray, Mr. Opie, may I ask what you mix your colors with?" said a lazy, pompous young student to the great painter. "With brains, sir, with brains," was the gruff reply. If I were asked what is the best qualification for the study of medicine, I should say, in the language of the English artist, "Brains," meaning thereby a high order of intellect, with suitable culture and untiring industry. I shall not stop to inquire how long a young man should be obliged to study before he is admitted to the doctorate, or licensed to enter upon



the practice of his profession. Nor is it worth while, on an occasion like this, to discuss the subject of preliminary education, as to whether he should be a Greek and Latin scholar, a good mathematician, a botanist, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher. If he has "brains," with proper training, a good sound English education, good, hard common sense, steady, persistent application, and a fondness for the profession of his choice, he cannot fail to become a respectable and useful physician. A knowledge of Greek and Latin, although not to be despised, never made a great medical practitioner. To the qualities here indicated, I would add that of refined and polished manners, so essential to success in every pursuit, but especially in that of medicine. If I were an autocrat, I should not permit a student of medicine to enter our ranks, if destitute of this crowning excellence. Physicians should be gentlemen, as well as men of science; gentlemen of the "olden school," with ease and grace of manners, blended with high mental culture and a high sense of honor. I am satisfied, from extensive observation, continued through many years, as a practitioner and teacher, that it is not so much the want of education that degrades our profession as the absence of refinement and high breeding on the part of its members. How difficult it is to make such a person, may be learned from what James I. said, when some low-born fellow entreated him to make him a gentleman. The well-known answer of the monarch was, "Na, na, I canna! I could mak thee a lord, but none but God Almighty can mak a gentleman."

A crusade has long been carried on against the medical schools of the country, because of their supposed laxness in regard to the graduation of their pupils. I have no defence to offer against this accusation; much of what is said is unquestionably true. The term of study is much too short, the number of lectures much too great, the requirements for the degree of doctor of medicine much too limited. All this, and a great deal more, is true, and must continue to be true so long as the medical schools act independently of each other. Under the present system, one of the worst that could possibly be devised, a system that I shall not cease to denounce so long as God grants me the power of speech, we must do the best we can. One of the great and crying evils of republicanism is the want of governmental protection of medical, scientific, and literary institutions. Our State legislatures license indiscriminately all medical schools, of whatever creed or practice. All stand, in this respect, upon the same footing, regular, irregular, and mongrel, with the same authority to teach and to manufacture doctors. The consequence is that the country is inundated with

medical colleges, and that, instead of working in concert for the promotion of the public good, they are, like so many Ishmaelites, arrayed against each other. Is it surprising, then, that the medical profession is not what it should be? Or, should we not rather congratulate ourselves that it is no worse? Hippocratic medicine has suffered great injury at the hands of irregular practitioners—the homœopathists, hydropathists, the so-called eclectics, cancer-curers, and various other hybrids—who fatten upon the credulity of their fellow-citizens, and spare no means to degrade us in public estimation.

The true physician, according to my ideal, is one who, to a refined and cultivated mind, adds a thorough knowledge of the art and science of medicine, a ready faculty of observation, a sound judgment, a bold, resolute will, and a moral character that is proof against all temptation. Like the brave and chivalrous Bayard, he is “without fear and without reproach,” affable alike to rich and poor, gifted with great and noble qualities, and so free from all that is gross and selfish in our nature as to be capable of enjoying as his own the triumphs of his compeers; or, like the youthful and accomplished Sidney, self-regardless and self-denying, an example of disinterested devotion, a mirror of humanity, ever ready to succor and relieve the necessities of his fellow-beings; or, like a great high priest, clothed in sacerdotal robes, anointed with precious ointments, and scattering, in rich profusion, the blessings of the healing art.

Physicians, as a body, not only perform a much greater amount of charitable labor than all other classes of men combined, but few, if any, ever accumulate any property, as the result of their professional toil, for the benefit of their families. Like Rabelais, every one may say, when he comes to write his will, “I owe much, I have nothing, I give the rest to the poor.” Notwithstanding this miserable record, they have always worked, in season and out of season, for the public good, and, in the hands of God, have been instrumental, by the application of their scientific knowledge, in prolonging human life in its aggregate hardly less than in its individual relation. Some diseases, in fact, formerly of a widespread character, have been almost completely exterminated through the agency of medical science. Scurvy, once so destructive, has nearly entirely disappeared from the catalogue of human suffering. The plague, which in one year in London literally decimated the population, has been effectually banished from the civilized world. The ague, which annually carried off thousands of persons before the discovery of the use of Peruvian bark, is no

longer a fatal malady. Pneumonia, dysentery, and the cholera of infants are much more easily managed than formerly; and typhoid fever has become a comparatively controllable disease.

To descend to a few particulars, let us see what the profession has done, and is daily doing, for the mitigation of suffering, and the prolongation of life.

Everybody knows what intermittent fever is, and how very common it still is in some sections of this and other countries. Prior to the introduction of cinchona, in 1653, the mortality from this disease was astounding. In England, according to Dr. Short, a writer of the middle of the last century, in the seven years immediately preceding the use of bark as a medicine, that is, from 1629 to 1636, the number of deaths from ague was 10,484, or 1 in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  of all those who died. During the same period 15,513 perished of consumption, or only about one-third more than were carried off by intermittent fever. Bark now gradually came into practice, and the mortality from ague during the next seven years dropped from 1 in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 in  $6\frac{3}{4}$ . Passing by eighty years, during which the use of this remedy was generalized, the seven years from 1735 to 1742 afford an aggregate mortality from this cause of 31, or 1 in 3767. In fact, death from ague had almost disappeared. Quinine, the alkaloid of bark, in due time superseded the latter remedy; and, although intermittent fever is still exceedingly frequent, a fatal case rarely occurs where this medicine is employed.

Smallpox, in former times the scourge of the human race, has been completely robbed of its terrors by the discoveries and labors of a single man, a provincial physician of England. Previously to the introduction of vaccination by Jenner, the mortality from this loathsome and disgusting disease was perfectly appalling. In England alone, with a population at that time of eight millions, the number of deaths annually exceeded 30,000. We may form some idea of the destructive nature of this affection by the ravages which it still commits among the aborigines of this continent, and among those semi-civilized people who neglect the precaution of vaccination. In India, for instance, in the province of Punjaub, with a population of 5,000,000, the deaths from smallpox are, it is said, never less than 20,000 a year. In 1869 they numbered 53,195. In England, on the other hand, with a population, at present, more than four times as great, the average of smallpox deaths reaches hardly 5,000 a year. The discovery of Jenner may proudly challenge the admiration of the world, based as it was upon a chain of experiment and philosophical induction that hardly finds a parallel in human inquiry. It literally sprang perfect from the brain of a



single man. With a drop of "pearly lymph," as an English writer has beautifully expressed it, inserted into the living tissues upon the point of a lancet, he literally shut up one of the flood-gates of human death. Although hardly three-quarters of a century have elapsed since this wonderful discovery was effected, it has saved millions of lives. The real monument of Jenner is, not the marble shaft erected to his memory in London, but the gratitude of mankind in all future ages. He may well say, with Horace:—

*Exegi monumentum ære perennius.*

The statistics of hospitals throughout America and Europe show a surprising reduction in the mortality of these institutions during the last fifty years, both in their medical, surgical, and obstetrical departments. A most gratifying change has occurred in the fate of parturient women and of new-born infants. A foreign writer asserts that in 1750, at the British Lying-in Hospital in London, one out of every forty-two females, and one child out of every fifteen, died. Early in the present century, in the same institution, the ratio of mortality was as 1 to 288 for the former, and as 1 to 77 for the latter. The new mode of hospital construction, especially that of the pavilion plan, now so much in favor, will reduce the mortality still further in establishments of this kind. The mortality from accidents and surgical operations, as well as from typhoid and other fevers, has likewise been materially abridged. During our late war, thousands of lives were saved by placing the sick under tents in open camps.

Who is ignorant of the wonderful improvements that have been effected within the last forty years in the treatment of the insane? Until Philippe Pinel, the great French physician and philanthropist, near the close of the last century, struck off the chains which had so long bound the inmates of the Bicêtre to the walls and floors of that establishment, it is impossible to form any adequate idea of the horrors which pervaded the interior of a lunatic asylum. The mind recoils at the contemplation of the woe and wretchedness, the filth and blasphemy, the groans and shrieks of the inmates. A menagerie of wild beasts was a paradise in comparison with such an institution.

"In our days," says an English writer, "we can scarcely form any idea of the then deplorable condition of these houses. If we depict to ourselves low, damp, and infected dungeons, without light or air, fitly designated by the name of cells, containing a wretched stump-bed, or a rotten straw mattress laid on the stone floor; if we imagine human beings, naked or covered with rags, nearly always

furious, chained, and shut up in these abodes of desolation and misery, real tombs which they never left but for their last resting-place, if we conceive ferocious keepers chosen from among convicts, treating these beings as brute beasts, making use of the most barbarous expedients, overwhelming them with injuries, mocking them with insulting jibes, mercilessly beating, or waging with them terrible and often sanguinary struggles, throwing down before them disgusting and insufficient nourishment, leaving them without water even to quench their thirst, or clothing to protect them from the cold of winter, and exposing them in this sad condition for the amusement of curious visitors; if we imagine, I say, these unhappy beings believed to be incurable, abandoned by their families, deprived of medical care, pale, ghastly, and haggard, stagnating in their own dejections, groaning under the weight of irons which lacerated their limbs, emaciated by repeated bloodlettings, excited by their horrible sufferings, and the inhuman treatment to which they were subjected, we shall then have a very incomplete idea of the frightful state of lunatic asylums in general, and of Bicêtre in particular, at this epoch."

Behold how complete is the change! A new era has arisen in the moral and medical treatment of these unfortunate beings. Pinel, with a heart ever alive to pity, like an angel of mercy, undertook the work of reform and deliverance to which Providence had destined him. Entering the madman's filthy cell, he recalled him by kindness and compassion to reason and self-respect, and thus created a new era in the history of human progress honorable alike to himself, to civilization, philosophy, and humanity. The non-restraint system of the present day constitutes a characteristic feature in the treatment of every lunatic asylum in America and Europe; the insane are no longer viewed as ferocious beasts, but as human beings whose reason, temporarily dethroned by disease, is often reclaimed by kindness alone, independently of the slightest medication, properly so called.

We cast a glance in another direction. Drunkenness is reeling in our streets; our young men, the pride of the nation, and our hoary sires, once the hope of the republic, are tottering under the influence of strong drink, upwards of fifty thousand being annually, it has been estimated, cut down in this country alone by this frightful abuse of alcohol. How many thousands more perish indirectly from its effects it is impossible even to form a conjecture. Nor is this all. Crime in its worst shape, filling our prisons, penitentiaries and almshouses, and demoralizing our people, is another of its terrible consequences. Of all the forms of death, none are more loath-

some and pitiable than this. The bloated inebriate, the slave of an unconquerable passion, may now find a home, where, away from his dissolute companions, amidst scenes of order, temperance, and all the comforts of domestic life, he may be restored to respectability and usefulness. Asylums for the cure of inebriates are of American origin, mainly due to the influence and exertion of one man, Dr. Turner, of Binghamton, New York.

In surgery the progress of sound reform is equally striking and gratifying. Thousands of limbs are now saved that, twenty-five years ago, would have been sacrificed; excision, in many cases, has taken the place of amputation; the use of the trephine in injuries of the skull and brain is much less frequent than formerly; the treatment of wounds has been vastly simplified; dislocations are now reduced chiefly by manipulation instead of extension by the pulleys; and certain lesions, once regarded as utterly beyond the resources of our art, have, through the genius and perseverance of one of our practitioners, Dr. Sims, of New York, been rendered perfectly amenable to curative measures.

Finally, not to weary you with details, who can fully estimate the blessings of the use of anæsthetics, a discovery the credit of which is justly due to our own country and to our own age? These agents have effectually banished pain from the operating and lying-in rooms, and in great degree deprived surgery and midwifery of their terrors. The eventful medical year of 1846, which announced to the world the glad tidings that the knife could be used without suffering, under the influence of ether, will remain forever memorable in the history of the healing art and of human progress. It opened to us a mine more precious than those of California; more rich in the blessings of God's gifts than any that had ever been disclosed by the art and science of healing. The groans and shrieks, once inseparable from the use of the scalpel, the cautery, the saw, and the pulleys, are no longer heard. Under the influence of ether or chloroform, the patient is unconscious of suffering, and the surgeon calmly and deliberately does his work. The parturient female, wrapt in anæsthetic sleep, no longer realizes the curse—"In pain shalt thou bring forth children." And who is the medical hero to whom the world is indebted for this inestimable boon, this wondrous addition to our happiness? Where is the reward which a grateful people have lavished upon him and his family? Alas, echo answers, where? Dr. Morton, after having knocked for years at the doors of Congress, only to be repulsed with mockery and contumely, has passed away; but his family remains, and is in destitute circumstances, a monument of a nation's base ingratitude.



Had Dr. Morton been a soldier and achieved a victory over a few Indians on our western frontiers, he would have been hailed as a benefactor of the country, and been elevated to a high office. Such is the difference, in our country, between the medical hero and the military, between the man of science and him who wears a sword. Jenner, for his labors in vaccination, received a liberal sum from the British Parliament; and Scotland has decreed a monument to Sir James Y. Simpson for his discovery of the anæsthetic properties of chloroform, the honor of knighthood having, for the same reason, been conferred upon him four years before his death, by his sovereign.

The study of hygiene has been greatly advanced within the last twenty-five years, both at home and abroad; and if the triumphs of this department of medical science have been less brilliant than of some of the other branches, they have not been less real. The health of our cities and seaports has been greatly promoted; our hospitals, asylums, prisons, and private dwellings are much better ventilated; sanitary science has been placed upon a broader and surer foundation; and the study of vital statistics has received a new impulse. In short, wherever we turn, we are struck with wonder and delight at the immense triumphs which medical science is achieving for the amelioration of human suffering, the cure of disease, and the prolongation of life.

Our materia medica is receiving constant accessions. Among the latest and most valuable of these I need only mention the bromides and the hydrate of chloral, which have already proved of such inestimable benefit in the treatment of nervous affections, mania à potu, and insomnia, or sleeplessness. Our dietetic resources have also been greatly extended and improved, and thus augmented our power over the cure of disease.

Our means of detecting and investigating morbid action have been materially multiplied within the last fifteen years, and brought us in contact with structures up to that period beyond the reach of scientific exploration. By means of various appliances of modern invention, as the laryngoscope, rhinoscope, ophthalmoscope, and endoscope we can readily see what is going on in the interior of the larynx, nose, eye, and urinary bladder, and thus more certainly detect and rationally treat their diseases. Frequent use is now made of the thermometer as a means of diagnosis and prognosis; and the sphygmograph, devised by Marey, affords us a more accurate mode of measuring the force of the pulse than we possessed before. I need not say anything here of the use of the microscope in the examination of minute healthy and morbid structure, and in

the detection of poisons, blood-stains, and various animal secretions, in cases of suspected crime, so necessary in legal investigations. If its real value be still undetermined, it is not too much to assert that it has marvellously augmented the power and precision of our senses, and has been the means by which the science of several of the branches of medicine has already been completely revolutionized. That its importance has been unduly magnified by many of its advocates, is unquestionable, and that it has not hitherto materially advanced the treatment of disease, is equally certain; but this is no evidence that it is not a useful instrument, or that it may not eventually prove to be of great value as a clinical aid.

I stated a little while ago that the science of medicine is much more advanced than the art. The great need at the present day is a better system of therapeutics, or, in other and more familiar terms, a more certain and definite method of cure. It is of little avail, practically speaking, to know the nature of a disease if we cannot remedy it. This unquestionably is the great desideratum, the point to which all our efforts should mainly be directed, the aim and end of all our labor. All the leading articles of the *Materia Medica* should be placed anew at the bar of the profession, in order to test their virtues, upon the most ample scale, and in the most patient, rational, and philosophical manner, freed from the tyranny of prejudice and hypothesis, and the influence of fashion and authority. Of the nine hundred and ninety-nine articles now before the profession, nine hundred are either worthless or of doubtful efficacy, and of the remainder the curative virtues of many are still undetermined. Innumerable recoveries have been ascribed to the influence of remedies that are now known to be inert. It was long supposed that mercury was a powerful cholagogue, but if we may credit the statements of Dr. Bennett, of Edinburgh, as deduced from the recent experiments of the committee of the British Medical Association upon dogs, mercury has no such effect whatever. Although men of experience may not concur in this opinion, seeing that there are some differences between dogs and human beings, there are many practitioners who give their ready adhesion to it, simply because Dr. Bennett occupies a high position in the medical world as a teacher and a writer. Professor Lister, of Scotland, a few years ago, announced that carbolic acid was a powerful antiseptic, unequalled as a remedy in the treatment of wounds, great stress being laid upon the alleged fact that it possessed the property of destroying the infusoria which, it is said, float about in vast numbers in the air, causing great irritation and other mischief

when allowed to come in contact with the living tissues after injuries. Carbolic acid at once became the fashionable remedy; almost every surgeon and physician swore by it, and yet the very existence of these infusoria remains as much a problem as at the moment Mr. Lister indicted them at the bar of the profession. What Francis Bacon said of the scholars of his day is wonderfully applicable to the physicians of our own. Speaking, in his *Essay on the Praise of Knowledge*, of the universities, he remarks: "They learn nothing but to believe. They are like a becalmed ship, they never move but by the wind of other men's breath, and have no oars of their own to steer withal." Medicine has its crinoline and its little bonnets not less than the ladies. Verily, there is nothing so absurd but that has its advocates and adherents.

The carbolic acid theory of Mr. Lister reminds one forcibly of the story, a long time almost universally credited in Germany, of the golden tooth said to have been developed, near the close of the sixteenth century, in the jaw of a boy ten years of age. A physician of the name of Horst not only avowed his firm belief in this occurrence, but very naively attempted to explain it by a reference to the constellation under which the child was born, alleging that on the day of his birth the Sun, being in conjunction with Saturn in the sign of the Ram, produced such an increase of heat as greatly to augment the nutritive forces, causing thereby a secretion of gold instead of bone, as in ordinary mortals. Horst, who wrote a book upon the subject, declared that this tooth foretold an age of gold, to begin with the expulsion of the Turks and the coming of the Millennium. At the present day almost every person can boast of the possession of a gold tooth without the interposition of the Sun and of Saturn, and perhaps the time may come when the story of the infusoria of the Scotch surgeon may be as easily explained. The efficacy of the divining rod, the merits of Sir Kenelm Digby's sympathetic powder, and the differences in the amount of water displaced by a live and a dead fish in a basin of water, were subjects that occupied the attention of the English philosophers in the reign of Charles II.

Thirty years ago everybody was bled, whether he had any blood or not; now the very mention of the name is sufficient to throw a nervous person into spasms, and yet it is quite easy to see that the time is near at hand when venesection will again be called to our aid in the treatment of many of the maladies to which flesh is heir. Mercury, not long ago, was regarded as a specific in constitutional syphilis. Now, few practitioners employ it. Numerous other illustrations of the fluctuation of medical opinion and practice might



be adduced, but these will suffice for my purposes. What effect such fluctuation must have upon the public mind, and especially upon men who cultivate the exact sciences, it is not difficult to conceive. Assuredly, if there be any one branch of human knowledge in which independence of action and high mental power are necessary for its successful exercise, it is that of medicine.

It may be assumed as a truism that medicine is, and always must be, to a certain extent, an uncertain science, and that much of its success as an art must depend upon individual experience, individual judgment, and individual skill. Considered in its aggregate results, as a great profession, exercised by all kinds of men, competent and incompetent, regular and irregular, the good it does probably but little exceeds the evil; and yet with all its imperfections, it is a great, noble, godlike pursuit, worthy of the highest aspiration of the human intellect. In this respect, the medical profession is like every other profession—the evil in all is largely blended with the good. In the hands of the scientific man there are few cases of disease, in which, if timeously treated, before the supervention of serious structural changes, the patient is not promptly benefited, and finally rescued from the jaws of death. Under opposite circumstances, the chances are, despite the best directed efforts, either that the patient will die, that he will make a tedious recovery, or that he will remain in a permanently crippled condition.

In bringing this discourse, perhaps already carried to too great length, to a close, I desire to call attention to a few circumstances interesting, if I mistake not, alike to my associates and to the public at large.

1st. The first, and one of the most important points is the annual publication of a Medical Register, embracing the names, places of residence, and the school of graduation of all the members of the regular profession. I took occasion, four years ago, as President of the American Medical Association, to call attention to this subject, and afterwards I brought it up in the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and in this Society, at its meeting at Erie, two years ago; and, although it was courteously entertained by all of these bodies at the time, it has not been practically acted upon by any of them. Dr. Packard, the Secretary of the Philadelphia College of Physicians, subsequently published the Philadelphia Medical Register and Directory, comprising a vast amount of useful and interesting matter respecting the medical and scientific institutions, the hospitals, asylums, and eleemosynary establishments of the State. With but little trouble and expense this work could be

converted into a State Register, thus supplying a most important want. Under existing circumstances it is utterly impossible to avoid contamination by contact with irregular practitioners in consultation, especially when the patient is at a great distance from one's home.

2d. All local matters connected with county Societies should be settled by the Censors of the State Society, so that the harmony and friendly relations of the latter may not be disturbed, or its time wasted, by discussions growing out of such relations. I am aware that there is a by-law upon this subject, but I am also apprised that a law which is not enforced is a dead letter.

3d. There is not sufficient social intercourse among physicians. They seldom meet except in the sick-room. From what I have seen of medical men I am painfully convinced that this is one, if not the chief, cause of the frequent misunderstandings and quarrels of which we are so often accused by the public. The physicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had a more delicate appreciation of the value of social intercourse than their descendants. In London, and other large cities in England, it was their custom, after the labors of the day were over, to meet at some coffee-house, to quaff their wine, enjoy a hearty laugh over a piquant anecdote, and to discuss politics and literature. These reunions were often extended late into the night, and were frequently honored by the presence of prominent literary characters, as Johnson, Hume, and Addison. Radcliffe, the great medical lion of his day, in the early history of these gatherings, always formed a conspicuous figure in the scene. It was he who with brutal candor said to King William, on beholding his dropsical ankles, "I would not have your Majesty's legs for your three kingdoms."

4th. "In the multitude of counsellors," says the Bible, "there is safety;" and yet everybody, professional and non-professional, knows that consultations, among physicians, at the present day, are remarkably uncommon in this country. This is not as it should be. The importance of consultations in cases of severe disease and accident cannot be overestimated. Every man, however humble, is entitled, under such circumstances, to the best aid within his reach. Young practitioners, in particular, should insist upon frequent consultations, almost as much for their own sake as for that of their patients, whose confidence in their ability is often shaken simply because they lack the experience of the older members of the profession, although their skill may not be one particle less; for, let it ever be borne in mind that age does not always necessarily confer wisdom nor experience the power of healing. Very often, indeed, the young

practitioner, just from the hospital and the lecture-room, is far the better man of the two.

5th. Much opposition still exists among the people to the examination of the bodies of those who die under our charge, thus shutting out from the profession a vast mine of material which, if properly used, might shed a flood of light upon the nature and treatment of disease. Whether this opposition arise from deep-rooted prejudice, or from a pious devotion to the dead, it is equally to be lamented, as it frequently deprives the medical attendant of the only means he has of ascertaining the cause of the fatal issue. When a king or an emperor dies his body is invariably inspected in order that his subjects may be informed of the cause of death; and the public tribunals, in all civilized countries, are obliged to examine all persons dead of poison or of violence, otherwise it would be impossible to subserve the ends of justice. To counteract this prejudice, for it really amounts to this and nothing more, a number of physicians and surgeons, some of them of great eminence, during the present century, nobly resolved, at death, to devote their bodies to the dissecting-knife, persuaded that so disinterested an example would not be lost upon their countrymen. As members of a great fraternity, exercising a wide influence upon the public mind, it is our duty to do all we can to place this matter in its true light before the communities in which we reside, urging upon every one the great importance of the practice.

6th. Quackery, in all its forms and phases, never was so rife in our country as it is at the present moment. It is a great and growing evil, which it is the duty of the medical profession to discountenance and condemn on all proper occasions, not by open discussions or newspaper controversy, but silently, by reason and argument with our friends and patients. Charlatans have existed from time immemorial, and their number and effrontery have always been in direct proportion to the ignorance and credulity of the people. The alacrity of the public to swallow patent medicines, and become the dupes of these designing, selfish knaves, is not, however, by any means confined to the lower classes of the community. Men of the highest rank and intelligence are not unfrequently their most lucrative patrons. In England, many of the gentry, and even of the nobility, were the patients of St. John Long, the most famous charlatan of the present century. That the common people should be deceived into the use of nostrums and quack medicines is not surprising, when we see, as we daily may, that they are endorsed by the clergy, newspaper editors, judges of courts, United States Senators, and other prominent public functionaries.



Cancer-doctors, herb-doctors, natural bone-setters, and similar creatures, the bane and curse of every city, town, and village in the country, are constantly consulted, even by men otherwise sensible, in preference to the most scientific and enlightened practitioners. Travelling mountebanks, who hang out their signs and advertise their pretensions in flaming hand-bills, everywhere meet with feeble-minded persons, men and women, ready to swallow their bait and to replenish their exhausted pockets. Ask these same persons to entrust their property in the hands of roaming lawyers, of whom they have no personal knowledge, or of whom they have never heard, and they would shrink from the commission of such a folly as much as the wisest people in the community.

Whoever has studied the subject must be convinced that quackery is inherent in our very nature; that it constitutes "part and parcel" of our very being. Mankind naturally possess a strong avidity for the marvellous, and a love of novelty often incites them to the commission of acts of which, when sober sense resumes its sway, they are heartily ashamed. We read with horror of the days of witchcraft, and are struck dumb when we find that an English judge, Sir Matthew Hale, hardly two centuries ago, sentenced two women to the gallows for this alleged crime. Is there no superstition, no bigotry in our age? Has not the witchcraft of two centuries ago its counterpart in the spiritualism of our times? If it do not, like its kindred delusion, send people to the scaffold, it sends them to the mad-house and to a premature grave. Mesmerism, clairvoyance, and other follies still have their advocates; many persons still firmly believe that disease is a demon that can only be expelled from the system in which it has taken shelter by the power of religion, pow-wow, or some other mysterious rites; war, with all its horrors and atrocities, is as much as it was in the darkest ages of the world one of the approved resources of so-called civilized nations in the settlement of their disputes; and bigamy, in its most revolting form, is practised under our own eyes, really the only institution on this continent protected by government!

Physicians, like lawyers, divines, and other people, must take the world as they find it. Human nature is much the same everywhere, and it is not an easy matter to cope with its frailties and prejudices, its follies and its crimes, its bigotry and superstition. Cherishing an enlightened trust in Providence, let us calmly and patiently perform our task upon earth, doing all we can to improve the healing art, to dignify and ennoble our profession, and to benefit the human race.



